

UNITED STATES  
CONGRESS  
OFFICE OF  
BRAD CARSON  
CONGRESSMAN

<http://www.carson.house.gov>



**NEWS RELEASE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***Congressman Brad Carson Web Site Named "Best" on Capitol Hill  
Site Receives First Congress Online Silver Mouse Award***

Washington, D.C. --

Second District Congressman Brad Carson (D-OK) today was identified in a non-partisan, independent study as having one of the best Web sites in Congress. The site [www.carson.house.gov](http://www.carson.house.gov) received the first Congress Online Silver Mouse Award from the Congress Online Project, a joint research project of the Congressional Management Foundation and the George Washington University, funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

"Communication to constituents about the job we are doing on their behalf in Washington has always been of utmost importance to my office," said Congressman Carson. "I have never viewed [www.carson.house.gov](http://www.carson.house.gov) as a web site, but rather an online Congressional office. As new technology continues to change the way in which we govern, I believe it is extremely important to stay ahead of that curve and offer my constituents a 'one-stop' way to find out information about legislation, pose a question on a particular issue, find out about important constituent services, and a host of other things available at my online office."

The report on Congressman Carson's site concluded that:

"Rep. Carson's website states that it is an 'online, interactive Congressional office...a one-stop shop for many important constituent services' and it certainly is just that. Besides providing constituents with numerous 'issue pages' and the opportunity to voice their opinions through online surveys, Rep. Carson actually interacts with constituents through an 'online townhall'. Oklahomans can comment or pose questions to the Congressman, and he responds personally by posting answers online. The responses are nicely categorized by issue, which allows visitors to learn the Congressman's views about topics that most interest them. This innovative feature provides an important service to constituents by creating a forum for the boss to directly respond to their concerns. In addition, it enhances constituents' sense of congressional accountability, a critical concern for many citizens. An added benefit is that, because the Congressman posts his response online, constituents can find answers to many of their questions on the Web site without having to contact the office for assistance."

Congressman Carson was one of a select few sites to be recognized by the study, “Congress Online: Assessing and Improving Capitol Hill Web Sites.” Overall, the report found a “disconcerting digital divide within the Congress” between a small group of congressional offices that host “good to excellent” Web sites that meet citizens’ online needs and the vast majority that host “fair to failing” sites. More specifically, the study determined that while 10% of congressional office Web sites received a grade of A or B, 90% received a grade of C, D, or F. The overall grade point average for all congressional offices was 1.67 or C-.

“If Congress and the nation are to enjoy the significant benefits of digital communication – better informed citizens, improved communications between the elected and the electorate, greater accountability and trust in government, and increased operational efficiency – congressional offices must bridge this digital divide within the Congress...and bridge it quickly,” the report stated.

The study, written by the Congress Online Project, evaluated 605 Web sites in Congress – all Member office, committee and leadership sites -- to determine which sites were the best and to assess how well Congress was using this new communications medium. This research is the first to combine a comprehensive analysis and grading of all congressional Web sites. The study awarded 15 sites with the Congress Online Gold Mouse Awards and 20 sites with Silver Mouse awards.

The report found there were major differences among the best sites when broken out by chamber and party. House Republican offices won 79% of the award-winning sites in the House while Senate Democratic offices won 73% of the awards in the Senate. House committee and House leadership Web sites also were judged to be far superior to Senate committee sites, earning eight of the ten committee awards and all four of the leadership site awards.

Overall, on a 4.0 grading scale, Senate Member office sites received an average GPA of 2.12 (C), while House Member sites received a GPA of 1.67 (C-). The average grades for Member offices by party and chamber were: Senate Democrats – 2.61 (C+); Senate Republicans – 2.10 (C); House Republicans – 1.76 (C-); and House Democrats – 1.58 (D+).

Web site traffic indicates that superior Capitol Hill Web sites are getting more visitors than weaker sites. One leadership site received 1.7 million “user sessions” in 2001 (a Web measurement for unique visits to the site). Average traffic to another award-winning site, reached 2,500 user sessions in November 2001, surpassing the combined average number of constituents who contact the office through other means. The House of Representatives reported that House Web sites received more than 500 million “hits” in 2001.

The report is designed to both critique current Web site practices and provide a blueprint for congressional offices that wish to improve their Web sites. The Web sites

were graded using five criteria essential to good congressional Web sites: audience, content, interactivity, usability, and innovations. The research included multiple reviews of the sites by the project team and an independent panel, interviews with congressional staff, and available studies on best practices in Web sites. CMF ([www.cmfweb.org](http://www.cmfweb.org)) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan education organization devoted to promoting a more effective Congress. The George Washington University, through its Graduate School of Political Management (GSPM), is conducting a series of studies on the impact of Internet and electronic communications on American democracy. The Pew Charitable Trusts ([www.pewtrusts.com](http://www.pewtrusts.com)) support nonprofit activities in the areas of culture, education, the environment, health and human services, public policy and religion.

The complete list of the Congress Online Gold and Silver Mouse Award winners is available in the report: [www.congressonlineproject.org/webstudy2002.html](http://www.congressonlineproject.org/webstudy2002.html).

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